



Ambassador's Girls Scholarship Program (AGSP)

USAID/Mali began the Ambassadors' Girls' Scholarship Program in 2004. Specific objectives include contributing to increasing girls' access to, attendance, and retention in school, as well as improving their academic achievement. The program is being implemented this academic year (2007-2008) in 109 public, community, and Islamic schools (*médersas*) in the three northern regions of the country (Gao, Tombouctou and Kidal), regions where education for children in general, and especially girls, is more challenging. The program has targeted grade 4-6 girls (1-6 in Kidal). AGSP is implemented in Mali by World Education, Inc. together with three Malian NGOs, maintaining contact and managing beneficiary identification, awarding and tracking scholarships and mentoring activities. The program has also developed strong partnership with many local organizations including mothers' associations (Association des Mères d'Elèves -- AME) some of whom are retired teachers and former students, parents' associations, school administrators, local elected officials, Ministry of Education officials, religious leaders, and other representatives from the development community. The partnership involves also the US State Department and Peace Corps.

Scholarship packages include school supplies, books, lanterns and cloth to make uniforms. Other AGSP activities include establishing and training AME, that provide sensitization on the importance of sending girls to school, school health and HIV/AIDS. The AMEs also organize and facilitate group work with girls and income-generating activities.

To date, in the fourth year of the Program, 21,000 scholarships have been awarded in Mali.

In September of 2007, USAID announced an additional component to the scholarship program. The component will target needy boys in the three regions where the program is currently being implemented, and will serve at least 400 boys.

The AGSP has also been a springboard for mobilizing foundations and personal donors to direct support to girls' education in Mali. As the program has targeted primary school girls, a need for assistance to girls who move into secondary school (*second cycle*) was identified. To this extent, World Education has developed the Northern Girls' Scholarship Program, financed by numerous smaller donors that have supported over 600 girls. In addition, the Batonga Foundation, founded by International Beninese singer Angélique Kidjo, recently initiated its Batonga Girls' Education Program implemented by World Education Inc., to complement the AGSP efforts in several West African countries including her native Benin, as well as 75 Malian AGSP recipients in Kidal, Mali.